

# *The translator's patronage: principles of responsible translation in the Jerome-Rufinus controversy*

Article

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# **The translator's patronage: principles of responsible translation in the Jerome-Rufinus controversy**

## **Abstract**

*The primary aim of this article is to integrate Jerome's statement of translation principles from Ep. 57 into its historical context: the controversy between Jerome and Rufinus about the status and the correct treatment of the writings of Origen, a third-century Christian philosopher whose ideas were now being condemned as heretical in a campaign led by Jerome's patron Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis. A central concern is to evaluate the techniques and the reliability of Rufinus' and Jerome's rival translations of Origen's work Peri Archon (On First Principles). Insights from this controversy are used to consider the status of translators in communicating between different parts of the church, bishops, and lay people. As a result of these explorations, I argue that translators of Jerome's and Rufinus' status were not valued merely for their linguistic expertise but also for their theological authority, as they had to defend their moral position as well as their technical skills in rapidly shifting circumstances. The emphasis on the translator's ethical commitment and reliability, I argue in the conclusion, remains relevant in current debates around translation.*

## Introduction

The rapid advances made in the capabilities of generative Artificial Intelligence tools in the past new years have intensified debates around authorship and authenticity both in academia and in the wider public. Among other concerns, the startling qualities of AI-mediated instant translations have led to consternation among language teachers and professional translators, who see their specialist skills dismissed as superfluous. Why should anyone spend time and effort on learning languages, if the meaning of any utterance can be instantly decoded? And what is the point in agonising about the long-standing problem of the competing imperatives of accuracy and accessibility and readability, if the machines have already worked out an answer by creating facts, apparently liberated from translation theories? My contribution here will not engage directly with this brave new reality; but my case study on the role of translation in the fourth-century Origenist controversy, from which emerged perhaps the most frequently quoted statement of the principles of translation, may at least provide something of a long view on the issues at stake in translation (and, by extension, bilingualism) that also resonate in present debates.

The Origenist controversy was a major flashpoint in the forging of Christian dogma and identity in the late fourth century. One notable casualty was the precarious friendship between Jerome and Rufinus, who had been classmates at the renowned school of Donatus and embarked on lives of asceticism with mutual encouragement. This article will revisit the Jerome-Rufinus part of the controversy from the perspective of the two men's activities and pronouncements as translators, including some close readings from their rival translations of Origen's highly contested work *Peri Archon*, in order to reflect on the contemporary status of translation, on the linguistic and subject-specific knowledge required to produce translations, and on the foundations of a translation's authority.

Before addressing the chronology of the controversy, in order to highlight the importance of translation, I want to draw attention to Jerome's *Ep.* 57, written to Pammachius in 395 to defend himself against charges of maliciously producing inaccurate translations. This is the work where the author most famously articulates his principles of translation, in a phrase that has become almost proverbial: "I do not render a word for a word, but sense for sense."<sup>1</sup> The ideas expressed in this passage, in particular the opposition of "word for word" and "sense for sense," were not new: as **Author B** has shown in his contribution to this issue,<sup>2</sup> Jerome articulated the substance of his beliefs about the tasks of the translator relatively early in his career, in the preface to his 381 translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon*. Nor was his approach original: the distinction between the two types of translation, and the expression of preference for the latter, was based on the statement of Jerome's older contemporary and friend Evagrius of Antioch, who had defended his translation of Athanasius' *Life of Antony* from Greek into Latin—a translation that was more elegant and less literal than an anonymous translation from around the same period—in the following terms:<sup>3</sup>

A translation from one language into another that is phrased word-for-word conceals the sense (*sensus operit*) and chokes the seed, as it were, with abundant grass. For where a speech is in the service of cases and figures, it struggles to elucidate even in a longwinded periphrasis what it could have indicated with a brief idiom. For this reason I avoided this as I translated the blessed Antony at your request in such a way that nothing should be missing from the sense even as something is missing from the

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<sup>1</sup> *me ... non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*, Jer. *Ep.* 57.5.1.

<sup>2</sup> See **Author B** in this issue.

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the liberties taken by Evagrius, both in style and content, see Bertrand in Bertrand and Gandt 2018, 59\*-60\*.

words. Let others snatch after syllables and letters; it is for you to seek the meaning  
(*tu quaere sententiam*).<sup>4</sup>

It is Evagrius, then, whom we should credit with advocating a translation method that privileges sense over verbatim renderings.<sup>5</sup> But it is easy to see that Jerome's formulation in *Ep.* 57 is more punchy and memorable. These characteristics, I argue, are owed to the combative context in which the letter was composed, in an early phase of the Origenist debate, to which I shall now turn.

### 1. *Ep.* 57 in the context of the early phase of the Origenist debate

Around 393 Epiphanius of Salamis, who had been Jerome's patron for a decade or more, decided to act on a long-held theological conviction of his that the third-century author Origen was a pernicious heretic.<sup>6</sup> Origen's admirers in Palestine included Jerome, Rufinus, and John, the bishop of Jerusalem. Epiphanius first sent a delegate, named Atarbius, to Palestine to make Jerome and Rufinus renounce Origen's heresies. Jerome complied with the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ex alia in aliam linguam ad uerbum expressa translatio sensus operit et ueluti laeto gramine sata strangulat. Dum enim casibus et figuris seruit oratio, quod breui poterat indicare sermone, longo ambitu circumacta uix explicat. Hoc igitur ego uitans ita beatum Antonium te petente transposui, ut nihil desit ex sensu, cum aliquid desit ex uerbis. Alii syllabas aucupentur et litteras, tu quaere sententias.* Evagr. *vita Anton. prol.* 1. The dedication to Innocentius, who died in 374 (Jer. *Ep.* 3.3, with Rebenich 1992: 60–61) guarantees that Evagrius' statement predates those of Jerome.

<sup>5</sup> The influence of Evagrius' translation of the *Life of Antony* on Jerome was significant: besides conditioning his translation theory, the work inspired the composition of three monastic *Lives*, of Paul, Malchus, and Hilarion. The echoes of Evagrius' phrasing in these works are significant, but they have not yet been analyzed comprehensively.

<sup>6</sup> Kelly 1975, 197: the earliest (extant) denunciation of Origen's works by Epiphanius is in the 374 *Ancoratus*, followed by *Panarion* 64 in 374–6.

request; Rufinus, who did not in fact subscribe to those theological theories of Origen's which Epiphanius found objectionable, refused hospitality to Atarbius, according to Jerome's depiction of the incident in *adv. Rufin.* 3.33. Epiphanius then appeared in person, bringing matters to a head: at a great festival in 393, he challenged John by preaching at Jerusalem about Origen and his heresies;<sup>7</sup> in 394 he forcibly ordained Jerome's younger brother Paulinian to the priesthood. This was done in order to free Jerome's monastery from dependence on local priests who were subject to John's episcopal authority.<sup>8</sup> Epiphanius' ordination of Paulinian was in breach of the ordinary customs of the church. To defend his action, he wrote a letter to John justifying his behavior and detailing the heretical points of Origen's theology. This letter was, Jerome says, widely read; but the controversy was fueled further by Jerome's decision to make an annotated translation of it, which is preserved as *Ep.* 51. According to Jerome, this translation was made at the request of Eusebius of Cremona, who was staying with Jerome in Palestine at the time. Eusebius' knowledge of Greek, Jerome says, was only rudimentary, and the translation was intended for his private use (*Ep.* 57.2.2). If Jerome's account is accurate, therefore, the point of translating Epiphanius' letter was not to draw attention to a local controversy by sending the translated letter to allies in Rome or elsewhere in the Latin-speaking west. However, a version of the translation came to be seen more widely, with the result that John and Rufinus accused Jerome of having mistranslated crucial aspects of it to make Epiphanius' stance appear more hostile to them than it actually was.

It was this scenario that motivated the composition of Jerome's *Ep.* 57 on the principles of good translation in 395. This context makes the formulation of these principles a defensive

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<sup>7</sup> Kelly 1975, 199. The source is Jer. *adv. Ioh.* 11.

<sup>8</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 51.1 (this is Jerome's translation of Epiphanius' justificatory letter).

move, rather than a constructive intervention in a professional discussion of best practice in translation. Jerome’s defense of his translation is embedded in a story of robbery and misrepresentation: some “pseudo-monk” (*pseudomonachus*, *Ep.* 57.2.3), turning Judas, stole the work to give Jerome’s “adversaries an opportunity to bark against” him (*deditque aduersariis latrandi contra me occasionem*, *Ep.* 57.2.3). As for the contents of the accusation, he outlines them briefly and dismisses them contemptuously:

They denounce me among the inexperienced (*inter imperitos*)<sup>9</sup> as a counterfeiter (*falsarium*), saying that I did not render a word for a word (*uerbum non expressisse de uerbo*), that I said ‘dearest’ (*carissimum*) instead of ‘honourable’ (*honorabili*), and that—something that is a crime to say—I refused to translate αἰδεσιμώτατον (“most revered”). This and similar trivia are my crimes.<sup>10</sup>

According to Jerome’s rendition, the faults attributed to his translation relate to an imprecise rendering of honorific expressions. It seems most likely to me that these would have occurred in direct addresses of Epiphanius to John: the *Letter* as we have it does not contain a form of *carus*, but the synonymous superlative *dilectissimus* occurs in the address (*Domino dilectissimo fratri Iohanni episcopo Epiphanius*: “Epiphanius to his dearest master John, the brother, the bishop”); the vocative *dilectissime* is found eight times, including in the third word of the first sentence.<sup>11</sup> The reproach would then focus on the substitution of affection

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<sup>9</sup> The adjective *peritus* is used of the knowledge of language: Augustine *Doct. chr.* 4.7.15 famously calls Jerome *utriusque linguae peritus* (“experienced in both languages”), referring to Latin and Hebrew (not Greek). I owe this observation to the editors of this volume.

<sup>10</sup> ... *ut inter imperitos contionentur me falsarium, me uerbum non expressisse de uerbo, pro “honorabili” dixisse ‘carissimum’, et maligna interpretatione—quod nefas dictu sit—αἰδεσιμώτατον—noluisse transferre. Haec et istius modi nugae crimina mea sunt.*

<sup>11</sup> *Jer. Ep.* 51.1.1, 2.5, 3.2, 3.3 (twice), 6.2, 7.3, 8.1.



for honour in the choice of *carissimus* for *honorabilis*, and the same would apply to the omission of αἰδεσιμώτατος. Thus, Jerome's opponents may have argued, Epiphanius would appear to be more critical and less respectful of John than he actually was. The relative positioning of letter writer and addressee on a scale of honor was a matter of keen concern in late antique epistolography, as was the negotiation of status more generally.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, the concerns of the critics may have been far from trivial: being accorded a lesser degree of respect would have compounded the injury of Epiphanius' original arguments against John's stance.

The following two chapters of Jerome's *Ep.* 57 are taken up with a long excursus on the sanctitude of private letters (*Ep.* 57.3–4). Whatever there may have been in his letters that was reprehensible, it was much worse to divulge them, and that in itself proves the weak position of his opponents (*Ep.* 57.4.2–3). Once his exasperation at this breach of trust has been exhaustively demonstrated, Jerome returns to the main point of the letter: while he would have been perfectly entitled to make a mistake in a private missive, this was not in fact the case. On the contrary: his opponents by reproaching him reveal their own ignorance (*Ep.* 57.5.1). This argumentative position forms the backdrop for his exposition of his theory of translation:

For I do not only confess, but rather declare openly that when I translate the Greeks—except for the sacred Scriptures, where even the order of the words is a *mysterium*—I do not render a word for a word, but sense for sense.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See e.g., Williams 2020 for these concerns in the correspondence of Paulinus of Nola.

<sup>13</sup> *Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera uoce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et uerborum ordo mysterium est, non uerbum e uerbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*, Jer. *Ep.* 57.5.2.

The long list of authorities that are invoked to attest to the correctness of this approach starts with two classical authors, Cicero and Horace. With Cicero, Jerome declines to go into the details of the omissions, additions, and changes in the latter's translations of Plato, Xenophon, Aeschines, and Demosthenes: these are owed to the different characteristics (*proprietas*) of the two languages.<sup>14</sup> Instead, he quotes from Cicero's methodological introduction to his translations of Aeschines and Demosthenes, *De optimo genere oratorum* 14, where Cicero claims that what matters in a good translation is not the representation of the words themselves, but of their force, and this is what Cicero has preserved (*uimque seruauit*, Jer. Ep. 57.5.3; Cic. Opt. Gen. 14). The originals are not "counted out" but rather "weighed out" for the reader (*non enim me ea adnumerare lectori putauit oportere, sed tamquam adpendere*, Jer. Ep. 57.5.3; Cic. Opt. Gen. 14).<sup>15</sup> The underlying metaphor here is of an amount of metal that is the same no matter the coinage in which it has been cast. It is not by coincidence that Jerome uses a passage with the same metaphor as that inspiring the opponents' characterization of Jerome as *falsarius* ("counterfeiter," Ep. 57.2.3).<sup>16</sup> The verb *exprimo* itself, though it may be a dead metaphor by this time, also alludes to the process of stamping a coin. It is the translator's task to transform the metal into the currency of the target language—without adulterating it, but without reproducing the formal features of the original imprints.

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<sup>14</sup> *quanta in illis praetermiserit, quanta addiderit, quanta mutauerit, ut proprietates alterius linguae suis proprietatibus explicaret, non est huius temporis dicere*, Jer. Ep. 57.5.2. For the use of *proprietas* in Jerome see **Author A** in this volume.

<sup>15</sup> Jerome reuses this image of translation at Ep. 115.3: see Bartelink 1980, 54, with references to further uses in Quintilian and Augustine.

<sup>16</sup> Forms of the noun *falsarius* and the verb *falsare* recur throughout the controversy; they are particularly prominent in Rufinus' *Apology* and Jerome's response to it in the third book of his *Apology against Rufinus*.

Horace is likewise quoted to discredit word-for-word translations:

Horace too, a shrewd and learned man, prescribed the very same thing to the educated translator in his *Ars poetica*: “You will not be concerned to render a word for a word, like a faithful / interpreter.”<sup>17</sup>

Jerome presents the quotation from the *Ars poetica* as advice to the “educated *interpres*,” but this is difficult to reconcile with the fact that within the quoted phrase, as commonly understood, the “faithful *interpres*” functions as the counter-model: Horace’s addressee is asked to act differently from the *fidus interpres* in rejecting word-for-word renditions. It is likely that this was a misunderstanding of Jerome’s: he has probably read the phrase “and as faithful interpreter you will not be concerned to render word for word”; that is to say, he took it to mean that faithfulness of translation does not equate to slavish reproduction at the level of individual words.<sup>18</sup> Cicero’s metaphor of measuring out to the reader the same weight in different coinage likewise lends itself easily to an interpretation in terms of meaning, and it is this which corresponds to the value of the constituting metal.

Rita Copeland has observed that Cicero and Horace operated from a stance that aimed to create a Latin literature that would emulate, and ultimately replace, the great works of the

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<sup>17</sup> *sed et Horatius, uir acutus et doctus, hoc idem in Arte poetica erudito interpreti praecipit: nec uerbum uerbo curabis reddere fidus / interpres*, Hieron, *Ep.* 57.5.5; Hor., *Ars P.* 133-4.

<sup>18</sup> Copeland’s comment that in Jerome’s reconfiguration “the terms of the *fidus interpres* have been so reconstituted as to promote rather than to proscribe textual fidelity” is a slightly different assessment from mine: my theory of misunderstanding means that Horace seeks to distance his creative writer from the (mere) faithful interpreter, whereas Jerome (mistakenly) took *fidus interpres* as a positive model.

Greeks that they were rendering into Latin.<sup>19</sup> To them, translation was not judged on its fidelity to the original, whether wording or meaning, but on its equivalent impact on the reader. In Copeland's ancient rhetorical terms, Ciceronian/Horatian translation is an act of *inuentio*, of creative appropriation.<sup>20</sup> This activity belonged to the highest stage of the traditional elite curriculum, of rhetorical instruction. The comments by Evagrius and Jerome, by contrast, align translation with the discipline of "grammar," which was traditionally positioned below that of rhetoric. Framing translation as a form of reading and explaining a text, of *enarratio*, privileges the original, rather than recasting it on the translator's own terms.<sup>21</sup>

Copeland argues that Jerome, in "an act of brilliant misquotation,"<sup>22</sup> decontextualizes these programmatic statements of Cicero and Horace from the competitive spirit in which they were originally made.<sup>23</sup> While Jerome appears to inscribe his practice onto a secular tradition, from which he carefully excludes Scriptural translation as a separate practice with its own mystical rules, he does not in fact share his sources' "motives of contestation, displacement, and appropriation."<sup>24</sup> Rather, Copeland sees him involved in the attempt "to resolve difference [between the original and the translation] by pointing towards a communality of

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<sup>19</sup> Copeland 1991, 34: "Once converted into Latin currency, the text takes on a kind of primary status, so that the translation can virtually supplant the original as a rhetorical model. The discovery of one's own literary language through translation carries within it inventional implications."

<sup>20</sup> Copeland 1991, 29, 33, 45.

<sup>21</sup> Copeland 1991, 2, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Copeland 1991, 45.

<sup>23</sup> Copeland 1991, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Copeland 1991, 43.

source and target in terms of the immanence of meaning.”<sup>25</sup> On this reading, Jerome subscribes to a transcendent dimension of translation: since all language, and Scripture in particular, has a divine dimension, this aspect both guarantees the possibility of an accurate translation and obliges the translator to do their utmost in creating it.

However, with the new emphasis on the primacy of meaning that Jerome so memorably sets out in *Ep.* 57 (and which had been articulated already in his translation of the *Chronicle* as well as by Evagrius), translation theory itself became a rhetorical battleground. Any translation (by a human, at any rate) is a practical application of values that betrays the translator’s judgement in myriad details, taking into account issues of syntax, sound, semantics, and connotations of words and phrases—the latter a particularly thorny issue in theological controversies. Any translator needs to square their understanding of the source text with their judgements of the reader’s own knowledge and needs, which causes complications when the translation is then read by unintended readers, as Jerome claims for *Ep.* 51. The central importance of the translator’s judgement, and the *de facto* impossibility of achieving a translation that is in every sense equivalent to the original,<sup>26</sup> mean that any

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<sup>25</sup> Copeland 1991, 43; 45 for the claim that Jerome is part of this project.

<sup>26</sup> In this context it may be interesting to note the suggestion of Walter Benjamin, whose “messianic” perspective has some affinities with the patristic position, that the true meaning of a text is realised precisely through the plurality of (all possible) translations, as all languages complete each other precisely through the differences of their individual elements (words, sentences, contexts): Benjamin 1972 (1923), 13-15. This means that conscientious translating is a worthwhile activity despite the fact that any single translation can never be perfect. See Richter 2017, 22 (translated by me from the French): “Benjamin breaks in a radical fashion with the discourse of the Judeo-Christian tradition which takes the myth of Babel as the starting point of thinking about languages, and which immediately confronts the translator with an impossible choice between the duty of translation, which he cannot honour without betraying the original and being unfaithful to it—even while ‘mourning the perfect translation’ (Ricoeur 2004 [1997], 19)—and the other option, scarcely more joyful, which

translation has the potential to be fought over, no matter whether the translator aims for equivalence of rhetorical force (as with Cicero and Horace), meaning, or words. The inherent contentiousness of any translation thus makes it a convenient terrain for carrying out arguments that may be tangential to the act of translation itself.

The rhetorical tactics of *Ep. 57* are plain to see. By talking first about the crime of theft and only secondly about the principles of translation, Jerome engages in strategic misdirection. It is he who makes the argument not about respect and status, but about the translator's right—indeed, their obligation—to deviate from verbatim accuracy in their renderings. In this context it makes sense for Jerome to defend any apparent freedom in his use of words—since these are the ones that can be identified easily by his detractors—by appealing not to his artistic license and rhetorical autonomy, but by stressing his concerns to transmit the correct meaning, which an over-literal translation might obscure. The fact that these principles were not invented for the purpose, but that the letter restates points already established by Evagrius and Jerome at an earlier point in time, also helps Jerome's argument: he locates his practice in an already-existing tradition, which helps to make it appear less controversial.

It is illuminating that criticism of a translation's fidelity was used as a weapon in a battle about power and authority within the church. The insight of a highly skilled translator like Jerome (and like Rufinus) into the sense of the original was itself a great source of such authority—and thus of power. The continuing salience of translation principles is illustrated nowhere more clearly than in the further developments of the Jerome-Rufinus controversy about Origen: for all the translators' honest grappling with the impossibility of achieving a

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consists in abstaining from translation, in order to better bring out 'the beautiful and terrifying responsibility, the unsolvable duty and debt of the translator'" (Derrida 2005 [1998], 561).

perfect translation, this combative setting remained decisive for their articulation of their methods.<sup>27</sup>

## 2. Translating Origen's *Peri Archon*

The mediating intervention of Theophilus of Alexandria eventually brought about a truce between Jerome and John in 397;<sup>28</sup> in the same year, Rufinus departed for Rome, and exchanged professions of peace with Jerome at his departure.<sup>29</sup> Not long after his arrival in Rome, however, Rufinus was asked by a certain Macarius to provide him with theological arguments to support the composition of a work “against fate or predestination” (*aduersum fatum uel mathesin*).<sup>30</sup> According to Rufinus, Macarius asked him in particular about Origen's views on the matter, because he had heard that Origen was well-regarded among Greek speakers. Rufinus found it difficult to provide a succinct account: Origen's very abstract argument in favor of the existence of free will depends on postulating that souls were created and categorized into angels, humans, and demons as a result of their free choices before the creation of the physical world.<sup>31</sup> Instead, Rufinus referred Macarius to the *Defense of Origen* (*Apologeticum pro Origene*) by Pamphilus (and his pupil Eusebius, whose name Rufinus omits because Eusebius had by then been labelled a suspected heretic). Macarius

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<sup>27</sup> See Robinson 1992 for the ascetic dimension of this struggle and its persistent hold over modern translation theory.

<sup>28</sup> Jer. *Ep.* 82 responds to the intervention of Theophilus, which is now lost: Kelly 1975, 207–8.

<sup>29</sup> Jer. *adv. Rufin.* 3.24; see Kelly 1975, 209, for other aspects of the apparent reconciliation between the two men in 397.

<sup>30</sup> Rufin. *apol. adv. Hier.* 1.11.

<sup>31</sup> Linjamaa 2019, 122; Origen, *Princ.* 1.8.1-2, 2.1.1, 2.6.3-6, 2.8.3-4, 2.9.1-6.

demanded a translation, which Rufinus provided, accompanied by a preface and followed by a short tract *On the adulteration of Origen's books* (*De adulteratione librorum Origenis*).

The *Defense of Origen* is effectively a florilegium designed to show Origen's orthodoxy by quoting his own works. It therefore acts as a useful introduction for the beginner, while reassuring them that they will find nothing controversial in it. *On the adulteration* argues that the works of Origen had been tampered with by heretics who wanted to claim his name for their beliefs, and that this is evident because the works contain contradictions which are unworthy of Origen's great mind.<sup>32</sup> Rufinus therefore proposes a method of correcting those misrepresentations by taking recourse to other writings of Origen's—including, ironically, a work falsely ascribed to Origen, the *Dialogue of Adamantius on Orthodox Faith in God* (*Dialogus Adamantii de recta in Deum fide*),<sup>33</sup> which he also translated into Latin.

Adamantius, the author of the *Dialogue*, appears in it as the main interlocutor. His identification with Origen is based on the fact that Origen was also known as Adamantius.<sup>34</sup> What makes the identification piquant, however, is that the *Dialogue's* Adamantius presents some decidedly anti-Origenist arguments about the physical resurrection.<sup>35</sup> If the *Dialogue of Adamantius* was thus taken as an exposition of Origen's views, it was no surprise that other works would contradict them.

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<sup>32</sup> As Bardy 1923, 94 points out, using self-contradiction is not a very solid criterion for detecting interpolation, especially when dealing with a writer of Origen's intellectual curiosity, rather than a systematic dogmatist. Bardy believes that only the notion that the devil is capable of redemption has been wrongly attributed to Origen, and that all other ideas are genuine.

<sup>33</sup> Ed. Buchheit 1966.

<sup>34</sup> Thus e.g., Epiphanius in his anti-heretical work *Panarion*, Anacephalosis 64 and 64.1.1: Clark 1992, 160.

<sup>35</sup> See Clark 1992, 168-171 for the theological positions involved in the *Dialogue*. According to Buchheit 1948, 314-328, Rufinus knew that the attribution was spurious but proclaimed it regardless.



Since the Greek text of the *Defense of Origen* is lost, the application of Rufinus' professed principles to this translation cannot be traced in detail. Jerome makes a series of claims about scandalous ideas corrected or expurgated by Rufinus,<sup>36</sup> but he gives no concrete examples, and there are no clear traces of these ideas in the translated text as we have it.<sup>37</sup> Given that the aim of the *Defense of Origen* was to show its subject to be of impeccable orthodoxy, the authors would hardly have included the sort of material Jerome claims to have found in it, so Rufinus perhaps has a point in ascribing it to heretical interpolators; but it is also possible that talk of heretical points is merely rhetorical posturing as far as the *Defense of Origen* is concerned, and that Rufinus' work *On the Adulteration* looked more towards the next part of the project.

This next part was Rufinus' translation of Origen's *Peri Archon*, again at the request of Macarius. This was a lengthy theological work in four books that was intended to combat the ideas of the Gnostics prevalent at the time Origen was writing. Unlike Pamphilus and Eusebius' *Defense of Origen*, the *Peri Archon* was agreed by Rufinus and his contemporaries to have contained ideas and phrases that were badly out of date in a post-Nicene church, concerning in particular the relationship of the different persons of the Trinity, the relationship of human bodies and souls, and the status of the devil.<sup>38</sup> If Rufinus did not want his Roman readers to reject the work as outright heresy, he had to adapt them in line with current doctrine, which he did. At the same time, however, he left other passages, whose

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<sup>36</sup> Jer. *adv. Rufin.* 2.15.

<sup>37</sup> Bardy 1923, 97-98.

<sup>38</sup> Given the mutilated state in which this work has reached us (see p. 000 below), it is hard to determine with certainty how exactly Origen discussed those matters, so we need to rely on Rufinus' methodological statements as evidence that some aspects of the *Peri Archon* were indeed objectionable to contemporary orthodoxy.

orthodoxy was being debated by Epiphanius and his tribe, substantially as they were in the original.

Echoing his claims of heretical interpolation in *On the adulteration*, Rufinus now used the prefaces of his translation of the *Peri Archon* to claim that he was following Jerome's example in rendering the true spirit of the work, removing interpolations and adding explanations from elsewhere in Origen's work.

For this reason, lest I suffer a strict censor besides yourself, I have gone even beyond my guideline, yet following that law and principle that as much as possible I should follow in translating the rule of my predecessors, and especially of that man whom we have mentioned earlier [that is, Jerome]. He, when he translated into Latin more than seventy books of Origen, which he called "homiletic," and also some of the volumes commenting on the Apostle, when in the Greek text of those there are found any small impediment, he smoothed them all off or purged them in his translation, so that the Latin reader should find nothing in them that diverges from our faith. (Rufinus, *Praefat. ad libr. 1 De princ. 2* (p. 4.13-21)<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Propter quod, ne te ultra tam grauem paterer exactorem, etiam contra propositum meum cessi, ea tamen lege atque eo ordine, ut quantum fieri potest in interpretando sequar regulam praecessorum et eius praecipue uiri, cuius superius fecimus mentionem. Qui cum ultra septuaginta libellos Origenis, quos homileticos appellauit, aliquantos etiam de tomis in apostolum scriptis transtulisset in Latinum, in quibus cum aliquanta offencula inueniantur in Graeco, ita elimauit omnia interpretando atque purgauit, ut nihil in illis quod a fide nostra discrepet Latinus lector inueniat.* Further details of this process are explained in the subsequent chapter, Rufin. *praefat. ad lib.1 Orig. princ. 3* (5.1-19) and in the Preface to the second pair of books in the work, which were translated in a second phase, at a more leisurely pace than the first two books, during Lent 398 (Rufin. *praefat. ad lib. 3 Orig. princ. 2* (94.1–10)).

Alerted to these claims by his Roman friends Pammachius and Oceanus (their letter to him is preserved as *Ep.* 83), Jerome, who had not yet seen Rufinus' translation, composed at their request a literal translation of *Peri Archon* designed to show up the dangerous deceit Rufinus had engaged in. The purpose of this translation was to give an unbiased picture of the merits and demerits of the work, "without the patronage of the translator" (*absque interpretis patrocinio*), as Jerome tells the story to Avitus around 410 CE (*Jer. Ep.* 124.1.1). The result proved so shocking to its recipient that it had to be closely guarded (*Jer. Ep.* 124.1).<sup>40</sup> Even so, a devious person managed to produce and to circulate a copy, albeit so rushed and garbled that the meaning became confused in many places (*Jer. Ep.* 124.1-2). This translation is now mostly lost, apart from some fragments given by Jerome to Avitus in this letter to correct the impressions of the poor copy that was in circulation. The fragments in *Letter* 124 amount to just under 600 lines worth of excerpts in Paul Koetschau's edition of the *Peri Archon* for the *Christliche Griechische Schriftsteller* series, focusing on "heretical" material.<sup>41</sup> Jerome warns his reader that he will find himself "according to the Lord's word, having to walk among scorpions and serpents" (*iuxta sermonem Domini inter scorpiones et colubros incedendum*, *Jer. Ep.* 124.2), with a host of alleged offenses against orthodoxy.

It is tricky to determine whether all those points cited by Jerome are valid, because the substance of the *Peri Archon* (as well as the *Defense of Origen*) is extant only in Rufinus' translation. Two sources transmit fragments of the Greek original: the *Philocalia*, a florilegium of Origen's work compiled by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus, from a broadly sympathetic perspective, contains mainly unobjectionable ideas, while a letter from

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<sup>40</sup> Jerome somewhat contradicts this assessment as he recommends this very translation to Paulinus of Nola in *Ep.* 85.3.1 in 399, so that Paulinus can benefit from Origen's insights into the problem of free will.

<sup>41</sup> Koetschau 1913, lxxxiv.

the emperor Justinian to Menas in 543 takes a hostile view of the author's 'heresies', and thus collects problematic passages. These fragments are supplemented by the passages of Jerome's translation as transmitted through *Ep.* 124. Given the different intentions and transmission histories of these works, integrating them is a task that is to some extent unsolvable in itself; Koetschau's edition represents a heroic, if flawed, attempt.<sup>42</sup> In any case, it is worthwhile for our purposes here to compare at least some passages that compete in claiming to give the real meaning in detail, in order to throw some light on the techniques of excerpters and translations alike. In the following I present two examples.

The first example, *Peri Archon* 1.6.3, has been condemned for arguing that the devil himself can be redeemed. The argument appears in the context of the problem of free will, where Origen argues that different degrees of lapses from an original state of beatitude will be recognised with an appropriate status during the final judgement. Here are the three extant versions:

Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam*, Mansi IX 529:

Οἶμαι δὲ δύνασθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων τοῖς χείροσιν ἀρχαῖς καὶ ἐξουσίαις  
καὶ κοσμοκράτορσι, καθ' ἕκαστον κόσμον ἢ τινὰς κόσμους, ἐνίους τάχιον,  
εὐεργετουμένους καὶ βουλησομένους ἐξ αὐτῶν μεταβαλεῖν, συμπληρώσειν ποτὲ  
ἀνθρωπότητα...

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<sup>42</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978 1.54-55 summarise the main objections: Koetschau introduced material from far-fetched sources like Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Leontius of Byzantium into the text itself to fill non-existent lacunas and his insertion of material from Jerome's *Ep.* 124 and Justinian's *Ep. ad Menam* did not take into account the different orientations of those texts.

And, I believe, it is possible for those subjected to the evil dominions and powers and rulers of the world, according to each world or only in some worlds, as some can do it faster, by doing good works and wishing to change into something else, to attain human nature at some point...

Rufinus, *Orig. princ.* 1.6.3 (pp. 82-84 Koetschau)

Sciendum tamen est quosdam eorum, qui ex illo uno principio, quod supra diximus, dilapsi sunt, in tantam indignitatem ac malitiam se dedisse, ut non solum indigni habiti sint institutione hac uel eruditione, qua per carnem humanum genus adiutorio caelestium uirtutum instituitur atque eruditur, sed e contrario etiam aduersarii et repugnantes his, qui erudiuntur atque imbuuntur, existant. Unde et agones quosdam atque certamina omnis haec habet uita mortalium, reluctantibus scilicet et repugnantibus aduersum nos his, qui sine ullo respectu de statu meliore dilapsi sunt, qui appellantur “diabolus et angeli eius” ceterique ordines malitiae, quos apostolus de contrariis uirtutibus nominauit. Iam uero si aliqui ex his ordinibus, qui sub principatu diaboli agunt ac malitiae eius obtemperant, poterunt aliquando in futuris saeculis conuerti ad bonitatem, pro eo quod inest in ipsis liberi facultas arbitrii, an uero permanens et inueterata malitia uelut in naturam quandam ex consuetudine conuertatur: etiam tu qui legis probato, si omnimodis neque in his “quae uidentur temporalibus” saeculis neque in his “quae non uidentur” et “aeterna sunt” penitus pars ista ab illa etiam finali unitate ac conuenientia discrepabit.

Yet it must be understood that some of those who fell down from that one principle which we discussed above abandoned themselves to such indignity and wickedness that they were not only held to be unworthy of this training and instruction by which

the human race is trained and instructed through the flesh with the help of the heavenly powers; but, on the contrary, they have become the opponents struggling against those who instruct and educate. This is why each mortal life contains certain struggles and contests, that is, because these beings, who fell from the better state without looking back, struggle and militate against us, those who are called “the devil and his angels” and the other orders of wickedness, whom the apostle named from their opposing powers. Now indeed, whether some from these orders, which act under the rule of the devil and obey his wickedness, will one day in future ages be able to return to goodness, on account of having the faculty of free will, or whether indeed their lasting and inveterate wickedness is turned into their nature by the force of habit, is for you who read this to examine—if, in every way, both in these ages “which appear temporal” and in those “which are not seen” and “are eternal” that part will not be utterly disparate even from that final unity and harmony.

Jerome, *Ep.* 124.3.4-6:

qui uero non fuerint meriti, ut per genus hominum reuertantur ad pristinum statum, fient diabolus et angeli eius et pessimi daemones ac pro uarietate meritorum in singulis mundis diuersa officia sortientur. ipsosque daemones ac rectores tenebrarum in aliquo mundo uel mundis, si uoluerint ad meliora conuerti, fieri homines et sic ad antiquum redire principium, ita dumtaxat, ut per supplicia atque tormenta, quae uel multo uel breui tempore sustinuerint, in hominum eruditi corporibus rursum ueniant ad angelorum fastigia. ex quo consequenti ratione monstrari omnes rationabiles creaturas ex omnibus posse fieri, non semel et subito sed frequentius, nosque et

angelos futuros et daemones, si egerimus neglegentius, et rursum daemones, si uoluerint capere uirtutes, peruenire ad angelicam dignitate.

But those who do not deserve to revert to their original state via the human race will become the devil and his angels, and the worst demons, and they will attain diverse ranks according to their merits in individual worlds. And the demons themselves, and the rulers of the darkness can in some world or worlds, if they wish to turn to better things, become humans and thus to return to their ancient origin—insofar as they, having been trained through punishments and torments, which they undergo either for a long or a short time in the bodies of humans, reach the heights of the angels. From this it can be demonstrated by logic that all reasoned creatures can come into being from all others, not only once and by way of exception but rather more often, and that we can become both angels in the future and demons, if we act carelessly; and the demons, in turn, if they wish to obtain virtue, can attain to the dignity of the angels.

The Greek phrasing as given by Justinian appears to present this contentious point straightforwardly as a tenet of Origen's, rather than an unresolved conundrum: it can be read as saying that, in the author's view, the devil and the demons are capable of attaining human nature (and thus the possibility of redemption through Christ): Οἱμαὶ δὲ δύνασθαι... συμπληρώσειν ποτὲ ἀνθρωπότητα. An important difference between Rufinus' and Jerome's version of the passage is that Rufinus leaves the possibility of the demons' redemption to the reader's judgement: "whether some of these orders, which act under the rule of the devil... will... be able to return to goodness... is for you who read this to

examine.”<sup>43</sup> Jerome’s rendition follows the Greek more closely than Rufinus’, reproducing, for example, the phrase “in some world or worlds,”<sup>44</sup> and including human existence as a stage for demons to pass through before they can return to their previous angelic state; but his subsequent insistence on the arbitrariness of demonic, angelic, and human identity appears polemical, and unlikely to correspond to Origen’s highly abstract theological arguments.

In their commentary on the passage, Crouzel and Simonetti, who edited the *Peri Archon* for the *Sources Chrétiennes* series, note that Jerome summarises the passage, rather than offering a translation, and that the fact that his wording is closer to that preserved in Justinian may but need not be a sign of authenticity.<sup>45</sup> This raises the question of the origin of the summary: would the passage have appeared in this way in Jerome’s translation, or is he presenting the summary for the purposes of the letter only? In any case, the fact that Jerome summarises—and in his own interest—means that the points he does not render need not have been interpolated by Rufinus.<sup>46</sup> In addition, Crouzel and Simonetti observe that the hypothetical phrasing is more typical of Origen than the definitive mode in which Justinian and Jerome state the point.<sup>47</sup>

The second passage, *Peri Archon* 2.3.3, concerns Origen’s (supposed) argument that souls had an original existence as incorporeal entities and acquired bodies as a result of the Fall,<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *si aliqui ex his ordinibus, qui sub principatu diaboli agunt... poterunt... conuerti ad bonitatem... etiam tu qui legis probato.*

<sup>44</sup> *in aliquo mundo uel mundis*, cf. καθ' ἑκάστων κόσμον ἢ τινὰς κόσμους.

<sup>45</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2.98-9.

<sup>46</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2.99.

<sup>47</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2.99.

<sup>48</sup> See Clark 1992, 11-12; cf. Kelly 1975, 197 for Epiphanius’ attack on this point.



and the question whether they will return to incorporeality at the end of time, in Christ's conclusive triumph:

Justinian, *Ep. ad Menam*, Mansi IX, 529

εἰ δὲ ὑποτεταγμένα τῷ χριστῷ ὑποταγήσεται ἐπὶ τέλει καὶ τῷ θεῷ πάντες ἀποθήσονται τὰ σώματα· καὶ οἶμαι ὅτι τότε εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν ἔσται ἀνάλυσις τῆς τῶν σωμάτων φύσεως ὑποστησομένης δεύτερον, ἐὰν πάλιν λογικὰ ὑποκαταβῇ.

But if the things that have been subordinated to Christ will also be subordinated, at the end, to God, all people will lay aside their bodies; and I believe that then there will be a dissolution into nothingness, with the physical nature of bodies coming to exist for a second time, if reasoned beings descend again.

Rufinus, *Orig. princ.* 2.3.3 (p. 118 Koetschau)

Quia omnes qui subiecti sunt Christo, in fine quoque subiecti erunt deo Patri, cui regnum traditurus dicitur Christus; et ita uidetur, ut tunc etiam usus corporum cesset. Si autem cessat, in nihilum redit sicut et antea non erat. Sed uideamus quid eis occurrat, qui haec ita asserunt. Videbitur enim esse necessarium ut, si exterminata fuerit natura corporea, secundo iterum reparanda sit et creanda; possibile enim uidetur ut rationabiles naturae a quibus nunquam aufertur liberi facultas arbitrii possint iterum aliquibus motibus subiacere.

Since all who have become subject to Christ will also be subject to God the Father in the end, to whom Christ says the kingdom will be handed over; and thus it seems that then the use of bodies will also cease. But if it ceases, it will return to nothing, just as it did not exist before. But let us see what happens to those who claim these things in

this way. For it will appear that it is necessary that, if the body's nature has been destroyed, it must be restored and created again a second time; for it seems possible that reason-endowed natures, from whom the faculty of free judgement is never taken away, can again be subject to certain movements.

Jerome, *Ep.* 124.5.5

Si subiecti fuerint omnes Deo, omnes deposituri sunt corpora, et tunc corporalium rerum uniuersa natura soluetur in nihilum; quae si secundo necessitas postularit, ob lapsum rationabilium creaturarum rursus existent [Hilberg; existet Migne, Bardy].

If all have become subject to God, all will put down their bodies, and then the general nature of bodily things will be dissolved into nothing; if necessity demands it for the second time, they will, because of the fall of reason-endowed creatures, exist again.

Although Jerome does not summarise this passage, as he did with *Peri Archon* 1.6.3 above, his rendition is much more concise than Rufinus', using 29 Latin words for 35 Greek words according to Justinian, whereas Rufinus uses 81. By contrast, Rufinus' expansive rendering seems to be designed to help readers understand Origen's rather complicated train of thought. More importantly, Rufinus distances Origen from the controversial claim at the centre of the debate, that rational creatures (i.e. human beings) originally existed in an incorporeal state, attributing it to some interlocutors to whom Origen is responding.<sup>49</sup> He says: "let us see what happens to those who claim these things in this way" (*uideamus quid eis occurrat, qui haec ita asserunt*), followed, apparently, by a *reductio ad absurdum*: if reason-endowed corporeal

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<sup>49</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2. 146.

beings are dissolved into nothing, it must be possible for them to be recreated. The notion of recreation does not fit well with orthodox Christian beliefs. Jerome, who does not distance Origen from these ideas in the same way, makes it appear as though they are the author's own beliefs.<sup>50</sup> Koetschau notes that the fragment from Justinian "agrees exactly with Jerome";<sup>51</sup> but in fact Jerome gives a slightly condensed rendition. He omits the reference to Christ at the beginning, and he does not reproduce the phrase οἶμαι ὅτι ("I believe that"), which frames the argument of dissolution and recreation.

The last point is significant in my view. Readers may have noted that the earlier passage analyzed here, *Peri Archon* 1.6.3, also started with οἶμαι. According to the lexicographers of the LSJ, this verb may be used "to express full persuasion, either modestly or ironically."<sup>52</sup> Might Rufinus be correct in interpreting this as a distancing formula, an ironic "I suppose," rather than an affirmative "I believe," in both cases? Is it a coincidence that two of the passages taken by Jerome and Justinian to prove Origen's heretical beliefs contain this ambiguous framing? But if it was in fact Jerome who altered the meaning of the text in translating it, how would he have integrated the passages that he merely excerpted in *Ep.* 124 for the sake of warning Avitus with the rest of the text in his full (and now lost) translation? Misrepresenting a text through a selection of isolated passages that may have been translated somewhat tendentiously or uncharitably is, one should think, far easier than sustaining such a misrepresentation consistently in the course of translating a coherent work in its entirety. We must suppose either that Rufinus has created a much larger context in which Origen is

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<sup>50</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2. 146.

<sup>51</sup> "stimmt genau mit Jer. überein," Koetschau 1913, 118.

<sup>52</sup> s.v. οἶμαι, 1034, point 3 under "Radic. sense."

systematically distanced from the heretical ideas attributed to him, or that Jerome has maliciously effaced this context.

I am in no position to prove that Rufinus was correct in framing the heretical views discussed either as open questions for the reader to judge or as the untenable positions of Origen's opponents. But the comparison makes it possible to see how subtly and intricately Origen expresses his thoughts in this work (even as seen through the hostile excerpts of Justinian), and to consider that the difficult nature of his prose may have made it easier to emphasize one aspect or another of a complicated argument in the service of a hostile or favourable quotation or translation, for an audience who may not have had the tools to engage with Origen on either a linguistic or a philosophical level. A conclusive answer to the question of who translated which passage correctly or incorrectly, including a fair assessment of the reliability of Justinian's quotations, remains elusive.<sup>53</sup> Instead, we shall consider what these brief observations may tell us about the state and status of translation in the context of the Origenist controversy.

Modern scholars have come to divergent conclusions about the translation ethics of Jerome and Rufinus. Elizabeth Clark comes down firmly in Rufinus' favour, emphasising the consistency of his theological view in contrast to Jerome's hypocrisy in denying Origen, on whose work he built his intellectual empire.<sup>54</sup> Koetschau, by contrast, laments the loss of Jerome's translation as an opportunity to reconstruct the original Greek, which implies that he saw Jerome as the more reliable translator.<sup>55</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti, however, take issue with

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<sup>53</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2.147 note that Origen elsewhere emphasises the stability of the state of affairs at the end of time, which would contradict the notion of an eternal cycle of reincarnation attributed to him by Jerome's and Justinian's readings.

<sup>54</sup> Clark 1992, 9-10.

<sup>55</sup> Koetschau 1913, lxxxviii-lxxxix.

Jerome's claim to have provided a literal translation: in the two places, that is, 3.1.22 and 4.3.10, where the two translations of Rufinus and Jerome can be compared with the *Philocalia* version (a florilegium not influenced by hostility towards Origen), Rufinus appears more faithful to Origen's meaning.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of theorizing translation, Winkelmann has shown that Jerome is consistent across his works in his formulation of principles, whereas Rufinus argues *ad hoc* to support a specific practice. Winkelmann finds that Rufinus talks about translation theories only in apologetic contexts and only in reference to Jerome, rather than applying a consistent set of principles.<sup>57</sup> In his subsequent translation of the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* Rufinus claims to have followed a more literal approach, even with regard to problematic passages; but in later translations of Origen's works he claims to have abridged the text.<sup>58</sup> Winkelmann finds that Jerome mostly traces a consistent line of being close to the text and notes that his translations of Origen's homilies on Jeremiah and Eusebius' *Onomasticon* are on the whole extremely reliable. Only in the context of the fight with Rufinus does he say more problematic things. According to Winkelmann, it is Rufinus who tactically misrepresents Jerome's considered theorising in order to defend his own methods, which he knows are vulnerable to criticism.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. Translation and rhetoric

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<sup>56</sup> Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 1.28.

<sup>57</sup> Winkelmann 1970, 534.

<sup>58</sup> Winkelmann 1970, 535-537.

<sup>59</sup> Winkelmann 1970, 543-544, 547.

Current trends in translation studies re-emphasise the rhetorical aspects of translations.<sup>60</sup>

Formal modifications to a text in the process of translation are not subdivided into changes necessitated by the difference of source and target languages on the one hand and personal interventions by the translator on the other; rather, there is a desire to consider more holistically the entirety of the cultural contexts determining the expression in both original and translation, with a particular interest in what the text is designed to do. Claudia Carlos' recent discussion of Edward Jerningham's 1800 translation into English of a French sermon composed by Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet in 1662 on the subject of the unrepentant rich man whose afterlife Jesus compares with the poor man Lazarus in Luke 16, makes some points that would apply equally, *mutatis mutandis*, to Rufinus' method.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Olid-Pena 2012 for a summary of this development, with further bibliography. In this volume, see also Ross on the rhetorical aspects of displaying or concealing one's bilingual skills in the same period (albeit mostly in a secular context).

<sup>61</sup> We should not forget that Jerome employed the same methods and was criticised, as we can see from his *Ep.* 61 to Vigilantius, where he defends himself along very similar lines to those articulated by Rufinus: "If I have therefore translated those aspects (of Origen's works) which are good and either cut or corrected or passed over those which are bad, should I be accused because it is through me that Latin speakers have what is good in him and are ignorant of what is bad?" (*si igitur, quae bona sunt, transtuli et mala uel amputaui uel correxi uel tacui, arguendus sum, cur per me Latini bona eius habeant, ignorent mala?* Jer. *Ep.* 61.2.2). Rufinus uses this exact passages in his defence: "But the Eastern teacher himself, who said as he wrote to Vigilantius: 'It is through me that Latin speakers know all that is good in Origen and are ignorant of what is bad,' has retranslated those very books that I have now translated, and has inserted all that had been omitted by me as suspect; so that, against his own pronouncement, it is through him that the Romans now know what is bad in Origen and are ignorant of what is good" (*ipse uero orientalis magister, qui ad Vigilantium scribens dixerat: Per me Latini cognoscunt omnes Origenis bona et ignorant mala, istos ipsos quos ego nunc transtuleram reinterpretedatus est, et omnia quae a me uel improbabilia praetermissa fuerant inseruit, quo scilicet nunc contra sententiam suam Romani per ipsum Origenis cognoscant mala et ignorent bona*, Rufin. *apol. adv. Hier.* 1.21).

Written in the midst of a fiercely anti-French climate, Jerningham's translation is in fact a strategic attempt to make Bossuet appeal to readers who might find both the style and theme of "Impenitence" politically suspect.<sup>62</sup>

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To promote a French model in such a climate, then, is to risk being charged with a lack of patriotism, or worse yet, to be suspected of being a French sympathiser.<sup>63</sup>

The strategies identified by Carlos in Jerningham's translation—a reassuring preface that acknowledges the abridgements made by the translator, leaving out particularly incendiary passages, and toning down the phrasing—even while, as opposed to Rufinus' explanatory amplification, Jerningham produces a more concise version of the text.

Both amplification and reduction are part of the orator's arsenal,<sup>64</sup> and the concern with the audience's response is fundamental for the rhetorical task. Eugene Nida similarly highlights the criterion of "equivalence of response" for judging a translation: the audience of the translation has to either understand the response of the original audience, or respond to the translation in the same way from the position of their different cultural context.<sup>65</sup> This approach seems to vindicate Rufinus' practice: it seems clear that Origen did not write in order to shock, but to help "orthodox" Christians argue against the idea of Gnostic "heretics"; and it seems that, with the exception of people like Epiphanius and, later, Justinian, Greek-reading Christians were much less liable to be shocked by his more speculative ideas than the Roman aristocrats who read Jerome's less palatable translation of the *Peri Archon*. From this

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<sup>62</sup> Carlos 2009, 337.

<sup>63</sup> Carlos 2009, 340.

<sup>64</sup> See Quint. *Inst.* 1.9.2, with Copeland 1991, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Nida 1964, 183.

perspective, then, Rufinus translated appropriately and faithfully. Of course, shocking the audience was part of Jerome's deliberate strategy, and shows a strong rhetorical motive for his translation too.

The story shows that the translator, while ostensibly seeking to efface himself and his labors (in line with ascetic principles), produces a rhetorical product—in the case of Jerome and Rufinus, perhaps even necessarily so. The specialist linguistic and theological knowledge of the two scholars seem to have been hard to parallel: in high-stake contexts like these, translators were not considered as technicians but as authorities in their own right, and translations were an important currency in the negotiation of relationships. While translations were written at the request of patrons, Jerome's phrasing, to which I have alluded in the title of this paper, confers the status of patron on the translator himself. Far from ornamental and otiose, translations continued to have the status of an action, and thus of rhetoric.

## Conclusion

There is relatively little that can be deduced from this controversy about the decline or otherwise of Greek-Latin bilingualism in late antiquity: even if elite members of society were functionally monolingual, they would have had professionals in their retinue to deal with day-to-day interpretation and translations as necessary;<sup>66</sup> if they were functionally bilingual, this would be unlikely to amount to expertise in the correct interpretation of theological treatises; and if Greek and Latin communities had become so divorced from each other that day-to-day

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<sup>66</sup> Professional interpreters who speak both Latin and Greek appear in ch. 13 of Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* (SC 508, p. 250) in the retinue of a high-ranking Frankish official, who seeks out the Syrian saint Hilarion for the exorcism of a demon possessing him. Hilarion promptly discombobulates them by forcing the demon to speak Syriac, a language which the interpreters do not understand.



bilingual exchanges had disappeared, they would have needed neither bilingual knowledge of their own nor personal translators or interpreters, as it would not usually be necessary to access information in the other language, with treatises like Origen's a rare exception.

As far as we can conclude from the Jerome-Rufinus controversy, by the late fourth century translation was not merely concerned with making something that was incomprehensible because it was in a different language accessible to those who happened not to speak that language (in this case, Greek). Like any other type of literary production, translation furnished ammunition for the building and destruction of status, the consolidation of networks, and the sharpening of extremist viewpoints. In each act of translation and talking about translation, the two men risked their own reputation as scholars, writers, and ascetics, their livelihood, and potentially their salvation. How much was at stake is evident from their lengthy defence tracts—Rufinus' *Apology addressed to Anastasius* (400 CE) and his *Apology against Jerome* (401 CE), and the three books of Jerome's *Apology against Rufinus*.<sup>67</sup> After the publication of these works, the controversy appears to have died down as far as Jerome and Rufinus were concerned, but the two former friends were never reconciled.

In this regard, Jerome and Rufinus are about as far as they could be from the ideal of a translation machine (which itself, of course, is subject in practice, if not perhaps in theory, to biases).<sup>68</sup> Unlike a machine, and unlike an anonymous translator or interpreter, Rufinus and Jerome are valued as figures of authority, who can and must take responsibility for their

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<sup>67</sup> The first two of these were written in 401, before Jerome had read Rufinus' *Apology against Jerome*. After he had read it, he added a third volume in 402, which responded to Rufinus' accusations in greater detail: see Kelly 1975, 251-256.

<sup>68</sup> Such biases can be attributed both to the data used to train the machine and to the algorithms involved in processing it. Savoldi et al. 2021 provide a useful overview of a wide range of aspects of gender bias in machine translation, as well as strategies for mitigating the impacts of such bias.

translation methods and their practical application.<sup>69</sup> The importance of their personal involvement and credibility in their translations and their disputes is thrown into relief by current debates about the status of texts and translations produced by means of machine learning systems: for example, the journal *Nature*, one of the world's most influential science journals, has recently announced its decision not to allow "tools such as ChatGPT" to be listed as authors, "because any attribution of authorship carries with it accountability for the work, and AI tools cannot take such responsibility."<sup>70</sup> The same is true of translations: they are speech acts, and as such they entail responsibility. If a translator is not trustworthy, their translation cannot be accepted. While machines can supplement and even (apparently) surpass a human translator's technical linguistic skill, this fundamental aspect—the ability to take responsibility, and thus to engender trust and authority—thus far eludes them.

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<sup>69</sup> In the Epilogue to his translation of Origen's commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans Rufinus frames the question of authorship attribution as one of honour, rather than accountability (though of course the two are connected). It has been suggested to him, he claims, that he should replace the author's name with his own, to acknowledge the extent of his contributions. He rejects this as a case of theft where Origen is concerned; but for his translation of the (Pseudo-) Clementine *Recognitions* he plans to add his own name before that of the Greek author, to read *Rufini Clemens* (Rufin. *Orig. in Rom. epil.* 4-5.)

<sup>70</sup> Editorial, 612. I owe this reference to Jumbly Grindrod.

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